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SERVICE DATE - NOVEMBER 4, 2003

DO

FR-4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-254 (Sub-No. 7X)]

Providence and Worcester Railroad Company—Abandonment Exemption—in Worcester County, MA, and Windham County, CT

Providence and Worcester Railroad Company (P&W) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon a portion of its line of railroad known as the Southbridge Running Track, extending from milepost 0.18, in Webster, MA, to milepost 10.98, in Southbridge, MA, a distance of approximately 10.8 miles, in Worcester County, MA, and Windham County, CT. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Codes 01550, 01570, 01571, and 06277.¹

P&W certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic to be rerouted; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Board or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-

¹ Pursuant to 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(2), the railroad must file a verified notice with the Board at least 50 days before the abandonment or discontinuance is to be consummated. The applicant initially indicated a proposed consummation date of December 3, 2003, but because the verified notice was filed on October 15, 2003, consummation may not take place prior to December 4, 2003. By facsimile filed on October 22, 2003, applicant's representative confirmed that the consummation date will be after December 4, 2003.

year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on December 4, 2003, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,² formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),³ and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by November 14, 2003. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by November 24, 2003, with: Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001.

² The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

³ Each OFA must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1,100. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to P&W's representative: Amy Silverstein, Assistant General Counsel, 75 Hammond Street, Worcester, MA 01610.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio.

P&W has filed an environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. SEA will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by November 7, 2003. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423-0001) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565-1539. [Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339.] Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), P&W shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by P&W's filing of a notice of consummation by November 4, 2004, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at

“WWW.STB.DOT.GOV.”

Decided: October 28, 2003.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Vernon A. Williams

Secretary